Alberta

News release

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Key investments in education, training and workforce development aim to address Alberta's labour force pressures

More than $7.8 billion dedicated to education and workforce programs in 2007

Budget highlights:

- *Post-secondary operating funding grows by $117 million, 7 per cent, to $1.8 billion*
- *Student assistance funding forecast to grow to $206 million*
- *Labour force and workplace programs get boost of $41 million*
- *Child care programs receive $134 million, 14 per cent increase over last year*
- *Kindergarten to Grade 12 education investment up $195 million to $5.6 billion*

Edmonton.... A strategic investment of more than $7.8 billion in education, advanced education and employment programs aims to ease Alberta's workforce pressures and build a stronger Alberta.

Post-secondary funding grows

To increase access to learning opportunities and help students with costs, *Budget 2007* boosts post-secondary operating funding by $117 million, to a total of $1.8 billion. *Budget 2007* also features a $53 million investment from the Access to the Future Fund to match grants for donations to post-secondary education to improve access and quality.

"A post-secondary education is the best investment an individual can make," said Advanced Education and Technology Minister Doug Horner. "This funding will help increase the number of spaces in apprenticeship and other post-secondary programs and provide increased support for students."

In 2007-08, total funding for student assistance is forecast to increase by 37 per cent to $206 million. This includes $25 million for changes to

student assistance such as increased living allowances and increasing the annual student loan limit. More than $95 million is budgeted for student grants, scholarships and bursaries.
In addition, $20 million will support grants to the Registered Education Savings Plans for children born in 2005 and later, and students aged 8, 11 and 14.

Students will also benefit from an increase in the education tax credit, which grows by 26 per cent, from $475 to $600 per month for full-time students, and from $143 to $180 per month for part-time students. The total cost of this assistance with living costs is $3 million in 2007, increasing to $10 million annually in future years.

Post-secondary operating funding increases include:

- **$95 million** boost in operating grants to institutions, to deal with inflationary pressures;
- $22 **million** to limit tuition increases to inflation as part of implementing the Affordability Policy Framework; and
- **$4 million** to increase student spaces, the first step leading to a 16 per cent increase by 2009-10 when funding will grow to $244 million.

Workforce training and support

In addition to supporting post-secondary students, *Budget 2007* boosts spending on workforce training and supports. More than $41 million for workforce development and workplace programs has been added to Employment, Immigration and Industry's budget to meet the needs of our growing population.

"Alberta's economic success depends on our ability to attract, develop and retain a capable labour force," said Iris Evans, Minister of Employment, Immigration and Industry. "Our investments in training and support reflect this government's priority of addressing growth pressures and helping Albertans and immigrants participate fully in our workforce."

This year's increases to support Alberta's labour force include:

- **$30 million** to implement Health Workforce Plan strategies to help address Alberta's workforce pressures by supporting the recruitment, retention and repatriation of health care workers
- **$2 million** increase for programs to help Aboriginal people become connected to the workforce
- **$2 million** increase for English as an Additional Language training and bridging programs to help immigrants become attached to the labour force

This budget also invests an additional $7 million in workplace programs that boost investments in workplace health and safety, and labour standards programs and supports.

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An additional $16 million will go to Children's Services to help ensure parents who want to work or continue working have access to affordable, quality child care options. This brings total funding for child care to $134 million, an increase of 14 per cent compared to 2006-07. The boost will be used to create more child care spaces, recruit and retain staff, make child care more affordable and address specific pressures in the Fort McMurray area.

"This investment will help address the need to create more child care spaces and decrease some of the pressure parents, who choose to work or go to school, are feeling when looking for quality child care options," said Janis Tarchuk, Minister of Children's Services.

Kindergarten to Grade 12 funding enhanced

The important role that Alberta's kindergarten to Grade 12 education system plays in preparing citizens and the workforce of the future is recognized with an investment of $5.6 billion. This is an increase of $195 million or 3.6 per cent over the 2006-07 forecast.

"The increases in the budget for education illustrate our commitment to responding effectively to the increasing diversity of the province and to ensuring all Alberta's children receive the best possible education," said Ron Liepert, Minister of Education.

Significant increases in funding include:

- a three per cent increase to all existing operational grants to school boards.
- **$7 million** added to the Early Childhood Services program to provide children as young as 3 1/2 with English as a Second Language programming in support of early learning opportunities.
- **$35 million,** a 22 per cent increase in funding for the Small Class Size Initiative to support the retention of 2,500 new teachers already hired under the initiative to maintain reduced class sizes. This brings funding to $194.5 million this fiscal year.
- **$9 million** for enhancing teachers' skills and abilities and the implementation of new curricula.
- **$2 million** to provide funding for children and students in private schools who require English as a Second Language programming.
- **$6 million** in new funding for technology initiatives.
- **$4.5 million** to support improvements toward existing Career and Technology Studies (CTS) facilities and equipment.
- nine per cent increase for special needs funding to school authorities to assist school boards in providing specialized programs for approximately 14,700 kindergarten children with mild, moderate and severe special needs and approximately 16,200 students in Grades 1-12 with severe disabilities. Funding support rises by $33 million, going from $382 million to $415 million this fiscal year.
- **$25 million** to support teacher recruitment and retention, by covering on a pro-rated basis the cost to teachers of their payments toward their unfunded pension liability.

In addition, the government continues its support for innovation in student learning through its $73 million commitment to the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement. This is a three per cent increase over the previous fiscal year.

Budget 2007 supports Premier Ed Stelmach's plan to manage growth pressures, as well as government's priorities of governing with integrity and transparency, improving Albertans' quality of life, building a stronger Alberta, and providing safe and secure communities.

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